

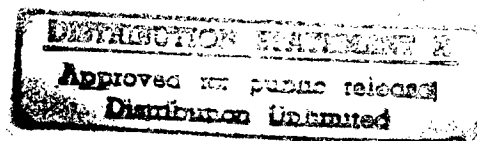
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FIRST CONGRESS ON PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

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FIRST CONGRESS ON PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

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A Glorious Forty Years

D. A. Lazurkina

Forty years separates us from the First All-Russian Congress on Preschool Education. This congress was a turning point in the history of the development of preschool affairs and in the history of the struggle for a Marxist-Leninist pedagogy and for ideas of the communist education of children.

Before the October Revolution there was no preschool education in Russia. In St. Petersburg there were several private kindergartens for children of the wealthy classes, and the Society for Promotion of Preschool Education, headed by A. M. Kalmykova.

During World War I in a number of cities separate preschool institutions appeared, shelters for local children suffering from the war. They were maintained through means of the zemstvo and various charitable societies. In tsarist Russia, under a regime of private property, there was not even any mention of an organization for preschool affairs on a government scale. Only the success of the socialist revolution created this possibility.

When, after October, the organization of a system of national education was begun, V. I. Lenin indicated to the Peoples' Commissar of Education, A. V. Lunacharskiy, the necessity of creating a preschool division. In this connection Vladimir Il'ich said that we had to begin the education of children from the earliest years, from the third year, and that it was necessary to free women from family burdens, to relieve them, to lift them intellectually and morally, and to draw them into productive and special labor. Vladimir Il'ich called upon me and proposed that I head the preschool division. From the first days of the February revolution I was a member of the St. Petersburg committee

of the party and worked in the Central Cultural Commission of the Municipal Duma. Before this my whole life had been in party work, and therefore it was difficult for me to leave it. I explained to Il'ich that I was not capable of a task of such size, that I had no experience, and that estimates frightened me.

But Il'ich answered: "And no one taught me how to rule a state. We must -- then we will work! Nadezhda Konstantinova," he said, "also had not done that kind of work, but now she will head the extra-school [vneshkol'nyy] division, and you will head the preschool division. We will help you."

Vladimir Il'ich and Nadezhda Konstantinovna really gave us daily help.

The preschool division was created under difficult conditions: there was no experience and little money, equipment or supplies. Everything had to be created from scratch, the network of preschool institutions and the staffs. The old intelligentsia declared a boycott against the Bolsheviks. I had previously known many preschool workers from the Society for Promotion of Preschool Education, such as Ye. I. Tikheyeva and Ye. Ye. Solov'yëva. We turned to them for help in opening short courses. They replied that they did not wish to work with the Bolsheviks. We had to think of what to do. Vladimir Il'ich helped here, too; he advised going to the workers in the factories. Thus we organized courses from among the women workers. I say we, and I smile: who were we? All heads of divisions in the Narkompros [People's Commissariat of Education] came to the old ministerial offices and sat there "in the singular"; even the technical workers had left. We published an appeal in Pravda. The only person responding to the appeal was Vera Fedorovna Shmidt. She actively assisted both in the work of the division and in the courses.

In March 1918 the division, consisting of V. F. Shmidt and me, moved to Moscow. We began to work together with R. Ye. Orlova, head of the preschool division of Moscow. We organized courses for the training of kindergarten workers, and the intelligentsia continued its boycott. Gradually S. T. Shatskiy, L. K. Shleger and others came and were enlisted in the work of the Narkompros.

The only educated pedagog-Marxist was Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya. In the emigration she had long studied pedagogical systems and theories and problems of preschool training, and she helped us constantly and concretely. In creative studies it was necessary to study bourgeois systems, taking the healthy kernel from them, and remake it in the direction which we needed. Sometimes, we fought against

the system of Montessori. Her didactic materials were dulling and withering to the brain and did not further the initiative, creativeness, or activity of the child.

In 1919 it was decided to call a congress on preschool education. It was necessary for the sake of experience in a new field, for strengthening the ties of the center with the local areas and for help to them, and for propaganda and popularization of the ideas of preschool pedagogs. It was necessary to solve questions concerning the role of the Soviet pedagog, the type of preschool institutions, the ways to train preschool workers, and problems of the physiology and psychology of the child of preschool age and methods of working with small children.

As I had always done in a difficult moment, I turned to Il'ich with the question of the necessity of calling a congress. Il'ich listened attentively, took an interest in the question, and asked what kind of reports would be given and who would give them. After some thought, he said: "I'll help you. A congress is needed: we'll allocate the money.

The congress was called for 25 April and lasted 10 days.

A special characteristic of the first congress was the participation in its work of the broad public and working mothers vitally interested in the development and strengthening of preschool activity.

At the congress they helped in the campaign for a new type of children's institution and for Soviet principles of bring up children.

In this regard great interest is attached to the Moscow worker Morozova on whether it was possible to open primitive kindergartens: "It has been said here that it is necessary to work in depth, not in breadth. But this isn't always right; it is necessary to take into account the situation and the time. As one does not take food from a hungry man, the same is true for us. We working women ask to have these institutions expanded, we need them. Bring in all the children from the streets. We are still ignorant, for we have seen nothing. This we don't want. Our children must be educated. Some have said here: Can't we return the woman to the family? No, this is impossible. We shall not return to our old pots and mops. Comrades, build up public preschool education, and we working women will help you!"

The congress progressed amid sharp struggle and exceptional enthusiasm.

The speeches of the worker-delegates, the communist-organizers and the pedagogs were full of enthusiasms, devotion to preschool affairs, and faith in the victory of the ideas of communist upbringing.

The First All-Russian Preschool . . .

S. A. Nevel'son

It was 1919, the second year of the Great October Revolution in Russia. During a civil war and an imperialist blockade the proletariat was turning an economically and culturally backward, war-exhausted tsarist Russia into a new workers' and peasants' state.

Life for the adult population was difficult under these conditions, and life for children even more so. In Tver' Guberniya, for example, there was no organization of supplies for children, nor were there provisions or even a market. Olonets Guberniya appealed: "We have nothing. Give us bread, provisions, cloth and shoes." In the Northern Dvina Guberniya as early as the end of 1918 there were cases of famine. In Moscow and partly in Petrograd the problem of feeding the children was somewhat better; children had special food cards depending upon their age.

The Soviet government took extreme measures to save children. Commissions were created to tackle the problem of homeless children, and the Council for Children's Welfare was organized.

It was necessary to change radically the living conditions of the country, and parallel with this, systematically to effect the upbringing of children, the future citizens of Communist society.

In this connection, during the first days after the Great October Revolution the Preschool Division was organized within the People's Commissariat of Education.

Local work was also being done on preschool education; kindergartens were opened, and uyezd and guberniya subdivisions were created. The lack of pedagogic cadres, equipment and textbooks was sharply felt.

It became necessary to coordinate the work of the center and the local areas and to draw the broad masses into the building of a preschool program.

The question arose of calling an All-Russian Congress on Preschool Education.

How could the forthcoming congress be made really "All-Russian?" This thought was ever present in the workers of the preschool division.

Given the fact that preschool education was a new thing, they decided that the organization of the congress would proceed along new lines, and that the congress delegate should have an opinion on all points of the agenda after a preliminary discussion. A broad mass of preschool

workers should be drawn into the preparation of the congress.

With these aims in mind, there was created an organizational bureau and an organizational bureau and an organizational committee for calling the First All-Russian Congress on Preschool Education.

In addition the workers of the preschool division of the Narkompros, the bureau contained R. Ye. Orlova, head of the Moscow City Section for Preschool Education, Comrade Kudelli, representative of the Institute of Preschool Education, and others.

The Organizational Committee included the following: the board of the preschool division, representatives of the All-Russian Council of Trade Unions, the All-Russian Central Union of Consumers' Societies, the central proletkult, the Commissariat of Social Security, and a number of divisions and subdivisions of the Narkompros. A congress program was adopted, the subjects of speeches determined, speakers appointed, a budget approved, etc.

There was not a single question of not only theoretical, but also practical, nature which would not be carefully examined in the preparation process.

Representatives of social organizations showed no interest in the matter of preschool education, new at that time, and did not visit meetings of the organizational committee. All work toward preparation of the congress was done by the organizational bureau: D. A. Lazurkina, V. F. Shmidt, I. O. Shleyfer, Ye. Ye. Kunitsa, R. I. Prushitskaya, M. K. Zhukova, S. A. Nevel'son and other division workers.

Appeals, leaflets, and letters were sent to divisions of public education, preschool workers, cultural-enlightenment organizations, and to the population. In them it was pointed out that preschool education was a state matter, and its tasks could be solved only by bringing into its work the laboring people -- the workers and peasants.

The organizational bureau created a number of commissions with the participation of specialists on preschool education. Questions were worked out on the type of preschool institutions, on a museum and an exhibition, on toys, furniture, and other equipment.

The materials produced in these commissions were sent to the local communities for information and discussion.

On the basis of letters and inquiries from the local communities, a new task was set before the preschool division: to call in advance of the congress a conference of heads of preschool subdivisions, in order to come to general conclusions together with them concerning the entire work on preschool matters and to arouse in local leaders a res-

ponsibility for the general work.

On 12 February 1919 heads of the guberniya preschool subdivisions began arriving at the People's Commissariat for Education.

On 13 February there took place a private conference of the preschool division and the heads of preschool subdivisions on the topic of the Council for the Protection of Children, whose task it was to save children from imminent starvation. Participants in the conference were asked to give information by guberniya on children's needs for food, shoes and clothing. The local representatives expressed their profound endorsement of the matter of the Council for the Protection of Children.

On 13 February 1919 the All Russian Conference of heads of preschool subdivisions of the guberniya divisions of public education was opened. In spite of transportation difficulties, in spite of difficult living conditions in Moscow, representatives of 22 guberniyas attended the conference.

Nizhegorod Guberniya was represented by two delegates (Comrades Ornatskaya and Uskov), Minsk Guberniya and part of Vilno and Grodno Guberniya by O. A. Gershuni, Vladimir Guberniya -- O. G. Shevelkina, Vyatsk Guberniya -- K. A. Luppova, Vologda Guberniya -- A. Z. Nechayev, Voronezh Guberniya -- comrade Novkov, Gomel' Guberniya -- L. G. Zakharin, Kaluga Guberniya -- S. V. Kazachkovskaya, Kostroma Guberniya -- O. M. Gashiyeva, Mogilev Guberniya -- Ye. V. Shleger, Moscow Guberniya -- Ye. A. Flerina, Moscow City -- R. Ye. Orlova, Olonets Guberniya -- Ye. N. Lyadinskaya, Orlov Guberniya -- O. I. Verzilova, Ryazan' Guberniya -- V. N. Poryvkin, Samara Guberniya -- Z. A. Kozlova, North Dvina Guberniya -- I. V. Chuvashov, Simbirsk Guberniya -- Z. A. Sokolova, Smolensk Guberniya -- M. D. Liberson, Tver' Guberniya -- N. F. Rayevskaya, Tula Guberniya -- L. A. Drel', Cherepovets Guberniya -- G. I. Dmitriyeva, Chernigov Guberniya (Novozybkov Uyezd) -- O. V. Shireyeva.

The first day was devoted to the report "On the activities and plans of the preschool division of the Narkompros." D. A. Lazurkina presented in brief the situation of preschool education before the revolution and disclosed the plans for preschool education in the socialist revolution, informing the delegates about the work of the division on preschool education.

The report on the activity of the center was rounded out by the reports of heads on the activities of local divisions on preschool education. It was disclosed that interesting work was going on in the preschool institutions,

in spite of the fact that far from all public education divisions had subdivisions on preschool education.

Together with this, serious shortcomings were also revealed. Preschool workers were not in all instances drawing into the creation of children's institutions broad masses of workers and were working isolatedly.

Of great organizational significance was D. A. Lazurkina's report "On the organization of preschool subdivisions," which presented a sound organization of the subject, beginning with the guberniya center and ending with the kindergarten and the union of preschool workers around a central children's institution, like a laboratory of a subdivision.

The conference resolved the question, important at that time, concerning the opening of primitive kindergartens. The delegates understood that it was a necessary, temporary measure dictated by the absence of pedagogical personnel, equipment, textbooks, and financial means. In addition to this it was decided that each preschool subdivision would open at least one children's kindergarten-shelter [detskii ochag-sad], which would answer to all the demands and principles of Soviet preschool pedagogy.

It was to be the center of propaganda and agitation for the correct position on preschool matters in the local communities.

The conference received with approval the suggestion of I. O. Shleyfer concerning the organization in the local communities of societies of practical workers.

A positive decision was also reached concerning the transfer of all preschool institutions from the Commissariat of Social Security to the Commissariat of Education.

The conference delegates heard with interest the report of I. O. Shleyfer, chairman of the organizing bureau for the preparation of the congress, on "The tasks and program of the All-Russian Congress." The report developed the theme, "The organization of preschool education on a nation-wide scale."

The program of work for the congress proposed by the organizational bureau met no objections.

The delegates expressed their opinions that preliminary work in preparation for the congress was necessary. In the preparatory plan for the congress it was decided to organize uyezd conferences and elect delegates to a guberniya conference and the All-Russian Congress.

The second stage of work concerned the guberniya conferences, at which the material from the uyezds was to be generalized.

The third stage, coming right after the guberniya

conference, would be the All-Russian Congress. Thus each delegate would appear at the congress prepared as a result of the discussion of the basic problems of preschool affairs in the local communities.

The standards for representation drew many objections. The plan of the organizational bureau indicated electing two representatives from each uyezd: one from the preschool subdivision and only one from among the practical workers. On the insistence of the local workers the following correction was made: the major guberniya cities had the right to send delegates to the congress on the basis of one for every 10 practical workers.

The conference adopted an expanded resolution on "Drawing the workers into preschool work."

The delegates left convinced that the decisions reached would facilitate the preparation work for the congress.

The workers of the preschool division of the Narkompros also contributed much to this meeting. They saw that the preschool program was giving out strong shoots, that the workers were awakening to a sense of responsibility, that unified aims and principles were being developed in the decisions on all questions, and that the methods and means of organization were now becoming the property of the broad masses.

The First All-Russian Conference on problems of preschool education was, by its results, an important stage in the organizational consolidation of preschool affairs.

The Struggle for a Soviet Preschool Pedagogy

R. I. Prushitskaya

Public preschool education, born of October and for the first time a state affair, was from the very beginning of its organization an important link in the system of public education.

The 8th Party Congress decreed the creation of kindergartens side by side with the creation of the new Soviet school.

The social transformation of society, the liberation of half of mankind from the chains of housework into productive labor and the struggle for the creation of a new, socialist society, made preschool education a problem far exceeding the limits of "pure pedagogy." It became vitally necessary to include a broad group of children by creating a network of children's institutions. The conditions for solving these tasks were extremely complicated. The first months of work of the preschool division, which was created in October 1917, passed in an atmosphere of hostility and sabotage on the part of the old bourgeois intelligentsia. None of the experienced preschool workers wished to help the division in its initial steps. All the work necessarily fell to two or three members under the leadership of the head of the division, D. A. Lazurkina.

In the first days of October the activity of the preschool division in St. Petersburg was limited to calls and appeals to the local organs and to the devising of instructions on the introduction of the kindergarten. In one of the appeals it was pointed out: "The earlier the development of social and working inclinations inculcated in the child and the more well-rounded his development -- his physique, his mind, his will, his independence -- without a doubt will guarantee the development of a creative personality."

The question arose in all its sharpness concerning the training of workers for central and local children's institutions, and the organization of short courses, on Lenin's advice, for working and peasant women.

Those finishing the courses became the bearers of new ideas, the organizers of the same type of courses in the local areas. Much space in the courses was allotted to sociopolitical training, which, side by side with the methodology of guiding children's labor and art work, broadened the political horizon of the course members and put them in touch with the study of Marxist-Leninist theory.

Simultaneously, preschool sections were being created in the local areas and the network of preschool institutions was broadening.

The preschool division of the Narkompros was trying to solve the problems of organization and at the same time did not cease to work out the content of work with children.

In the commissions, into which specialists were drawn, many differences of opinion were voiced, both as to the basic direction of preschool work and the theoretical divergencies on particular questions.

Under the guise of careful treatment of the child, Ye. I. Tikheyeva proposed protecting him from the gloomy impressions of reality around him. She referred to the pedagogy of J. J. Rousseau, who protected the child from bad influences by leading him to nature. The work of M. Sventitskaya was permeated with mysticism, and not devoid of religious tendencies. M. Sventitskaya, Ye. Solovy'eva, Pettsel' -- all were for "apoliticalness," for "freedom" of pedagogical views, and for the non-interference of the Narkompros. There were also varying opinions regarding the length of time children were to spend in kindergarten. The fear that the child would become over-fatigued in the collective led to rejection of the broad inclusion of children in preschool institutions. The question of primitives [kindergartens] as a temporary, necessary demand of life was subjected to sharp criticism. All this created difficulties and slowed down the creation of the bases of Soviet preschool pedagogy.

It became necessary to have an all-round critique of the false bourgeois theories widespread among a certain segment of preschool workers. The question of calling the congress was growing urgent. Its task was to discredit the anti-Marxist theories on preschool education and attract the most progressive specialists to the work and to the development of the principles of Soviet pedagogy.

A basic report at the congress was one on tasks of social preschool education in connection with the new forms of life and the developing debate on problems concerning the type of children's institution and the training of workers.

Preschool education is a matter for the state. The child is a future builder of life. The radical change of social conditions changes also the approach to preschool upbringing. Therefore the issue of the aims and tasks of upbringing becomes a vital one. "No matter how small the child, he cannot be isolated from the influence of his environment," the delegates said. The child from a proletarian

rian environment, living near the factory or in workers' quarters, hearing their revolutionary songs and their conversations, is infected by the general attitude. He begins to understand the present age.

Counterpoising antimaterialist ideas by the organization of the environment and the active education of children by public-spirited pedagogs, the congress took a firm line in the struggle with so-called "ideas of free education."

The reports and speeches given presented convincing arguments for education with an aim, for the development of collective feelings, and for the creation of conditions for the happy life, play and work of the child. In the struggle for creation of a new social system, without exploitation and oppression, it is necessary to educate the children into fighters for the new, into future citizens of communist society, and to teach them without mysticism and religion to understand the conditions around them.

The delegates emphasized with all fervor that the pedagog should be politically mature, free of prejudices, and firmly aware of for what and whom he is educating.

The controversy concerning the question of training of cadres was particularly intense. S. T. Shatskiy asserted: "The view that the pedagog should be a communist is incorrect, since intrusion of communism into the school can lead to adverse results. It is necessary to secure the freedom of pedagogical organizations and to acquire confidence in them." The representative of Narkompros dealt a requisite rebuff to this position: "Confidence should be treated with great caution. We have to re-educate teachers for whom 300 years of tsarist discipline cannot have passed without a trace. It is necessary to shake up the old teaching profession, broaden its outlook, educate it politically and enlist it into the work of the building of socialism. This is our task. Its solutions need appropriate conditions. We need pedagogs -- creators of a new life, of a new Soviet pedagogy which fulfills the needs of socialist society. We invite all who wish to live and work creatively for the Soviet regime. It is necessary to understand the new conditions and to work together." This was the appeal of the congress.

This approach to the matter introduced clarity into the discussion of the problems. The attitude of a certain segment of the congress's participants took a sudden change. The conditions had been created for joint creative work.

The first congress played a large role in the further development of preschool matters. It strengthened the ties

with the local communities, gave extensive material for conclusions and generalizations, and helped more concretely to guide the pedagogical process.

The significance of the first congress lies in the fact that it reflects the work of the starting period, a period of constant struggle and search for paths to a Soviet preschool pedagogy and its formation.

The exceptional attention of the party and of V. I. Lenin and N. K. Krupskaya to preschool education attended us in this work and afforded us the opportunity of enlisting the broad masses of workers into creative work on preschool development.

The First Congress

L. A. Aleksandrovskaya

In the grim year of 1919, when the country was still surrounded by the intervention of 14 imperialist countries, the First All-Russian Congress on Preschool Education was held in Moscow. It was not large. Preschool education as one of the links in a system of public education in the country was only just being born. Under the conditions of general devastation it was not easy to get to Moscow.

We from Samara arrived late, after the congress had already begun. I remember with what excitement and happiness we entered the House of congresses on Kariton'yevskiy Pereulok, where the first meeting was already in progress. In spite of the difficulties over 500 people had assembled. The desire to be at the congress was understandable and not surprising. People came to work on preschool matters as a matter of calling, with great revolutionary enthusiasm, in many cases with very little special preparation or altogether without preparation. Data from questionnaires from the congress material showed that of 297 delegates, 157 had no special preparation.

It was vitally necessary to examine the various pedagogical movements of the period, exchange experience, knowledge, skills and methods of educational work, and to clarify what was new in organizational questions.

The congress lasted ten days. But even this was little time. Arguments and discussions of reports continued into the short intervals between sessions. In the evening after the meetings the workers exchanged experiences. These were in fact genuine seminars: they rehearsed children's songs and singing and dancing games, they told stories, they taught each other how to make all kinds of things from cast-off goods, they made toys and instructive educational games. People tried to transmit to one another much of what could improve and enrich the content of work with children.

Everything in the country was being created anew: members of the congress recognized clearly that the position of preschool work, too, had to be developed, strengthened, popularized, and consolidated into the system of public education.

There were few funds, and in spite of their lack, everything was done so that children in preschool institutions would be surrounded by care and attention and that a high quality of educational work would be assured.

At that period the congress was to decide many com-

plex tasks of ideological, organizational, and methodological character. The main questions concerned cadres and the popularization of the idea of Soviet preschool education throughout the country.

There were four principal reports at the congress: the tasks of social preschool education in connection with the new forms of life; the basic type of preschool institution; the training of preschool workers; and the organizational task in the local areas and at the center.

The composition of the delegates was varied. On one side were the old preschool workers L. K. Shleger, L. I. Chulitskaya, Ye. I. Tikheyeva and S. R. Shatskiy, who had experience in the work and had definite views on preschool education, theoretical baggage based on the generalization of practical work in kindergartens for privileged children in tsarist Russia. On the other side was the youth with little experience, theoretically unprepared, but full of the desire for creative work, passionately fond of children and preschool affairs.

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In her report D. A. Lazurkina, on the basis of an analysis of the influence of capitalism upon the destruction of the family, proposed tasks before the socialist state in the field of the education of the young generation. She emphasized that public education should become a government matter, and that it was necessary to create for the child such conditions that he would receive a well-rounded education. D. A. Lazurkina pointed out that the task was to make preschool education become not only accessible to all, but also obligatory for all. The congress was to advance this position as its motto, as the task toward the solution of which it was necessary to strive.

The report emphasized with exceptional force the necessity of propagandizing and popularizing the ideas of the preschool cause, of drawing the broad masses of workers and peasants into their development, and of exhorting pedagogs to give to the communist education of children their talent and creativeness.

The speeches concerning D. A. Lazurkina's report are of great interest. Many spoke correctly of the necessity to tie in education with practice and with actual life. Certain comrades permitted exaggerations in their speeches, holding that "children's organizations are possible even among youngsters of 4-6 years. . . it is necessary to accustom them to such concepts as the meeting, the delegate, and responsi-

bility." However, for that period, when everything old and outdated had to be destroyed, such exaggerations were probably inevitable.

Many spoke on the topic of universal accessibility and universal obligation of preschool education. The principal obstacle to this was rightly considered the lack of funds, quarters, equipment, and workers.

Many speeches of considerable content were concerned with what kind of person the pedagog should be, what should be his world outlook, his social role. This question was particularly important at that time, for it is a known fact that at the beginning of the Soviet regime not all pedagogs were on the side of the Soviets.

The report of V. F. Shmidt, "On the activities of local and central organs of preschool education" indicated the difficulty of organizing preschool sections in the center and in the local areas, particularly in connection with the atmosphere of hostility and sabotage from segments of the old specialists on preschool education in Leningrad and Moscow during 1917-1918.

As the report showed, with a lack of funds and workers, and with poor financial support from the center, preschool subdivisions were organized in 1918 in 102 uyezds, and 400 kindergartens opened. This inspired in us delegates the conviction that it was possible to overcome all obstacles, and that the preschool task would develop ahead still more broadly.

Life more brilliantly confirmed the words of V. F. Shmidt.

An attentive audience heard the report on the training of teachers for kindergartens and on the subject of what kind of person the teacher should be, on his social and ideological make-up. The immediate task was to solve all these problems, to find the right paths, and to change the opinions of those who still held non-Marxist views.

The reports and speeches of the First Congress on Preschool Education played a great role for us, at that time young workers, and forced us to think about many things. All of us still lacked knowledge. We did not work badly because genuine love for children helped us intuitively to find the right paths and methods.

The congress was for us a genuine political and pedagogical school.

The first congress on preschool education made a valuable contribution to the history of the development of preschool education in our country.

In connection with the grandiose perspectives presen-

ted by the 21st Congress of the Communist Party in the field of public education and in the field of communist education, we recall today with particular emotion and pride the decisions of the first preschool congress which took place 40 years ago. You see, even at the dawn of its development preschool workers correctly understood the tasks set by the Party and the Soviet government in the education of the future builders of communism.

Forty years have passed since the first congress on preschool education opened. It is not a long historical period. But how everything has changed in our state even in this field. From a few kindergartens in the entire country to 24,800 kindergartens now in the RSFSR alone and from several hundred preschool workers to 130,000.

All this is possible only in the Nation of Soviets, all this is the result of the constant great concern of our party, the Soviet state, and the entire Soviet people for the young generation, the generation of the builders of a communist society.

Preschool Work in Moscow on the Eve of the First Congress on Preschool Education

R. Ye. Orlova

In the summer of 1917, in the period of the preparation of the working class under the leadership of the Bolshevik party for the conquest of power, on the initiative of the Bolshevik fraction in the Moscow Soviet of workers' Deputies a cultural division was organized and entrusted with cultural-educational work among the working men and women and the organization of preschool institutions.

The first step in realizing the tasks of public preschool education was to establish ties with the Bolsheviks working in the Moscow bureau of trade unions. The comrades solved the problem operatively, and in several enterprises -- in the Mikhelson plant (now the plant imeni Vladimir Il'ich), in the Tsindel' factory (now the First Cotton Printing Factory) and other plant and factory committees began preparations for organizing kindergartens.

The kindergarten at the Tsindel' factory was opened in the autumn, on the eve of the Great October Revolution. The factory owner understood the necessity of such a concession to the demands of the workers in the complicated situation. The kindergarten was a victory for the working men and women of the factory.

In the pre-October period it had not been possible to accomplish a broad organization of preschool institutions.

In February 1918 the Moscow Department of Public Education was formed. It contained a preschool section (subsequently the preschool subdivision). This section inherited from the past three kindergartens attached to "widows' homes," the kindergarten imeni Kel'ina, and nine shelters of the "Society for the Care of Poor Children." Two hundred and fifty children were brought up in these institutions. At the beginning of 1919 the section took over control of the institutions of social security for children of preschool age.

Budget allotments gave no possibility for the broad development of a network of kindergartens. The propaganda for public preschool education begun through the trade union organizations, had borne fruit. The participation of the working community in the creation of preschool institutions went into the practical stage. The plant and factory committees displayed initiative in organizing kindergartens,

producing organizers, seeking out quarters and reconditioning them and equipping them with their own efforts, and sometimes even finding funds for their upkeep.

On the initiative of local workers' organizations kindergartens were formed at the Zamoskvorech'ye textile factories (at present the factories imeni Frunze and imeni Kalinin factories), at the "Mars" factory in Blagushche-Lefortovskiy, and in the present Baumanskiy Streetcar Depot (now the Shchepetil'nikovskiy) and many others.

The Moscow Council of Trade Unions, the unions of metal workers, textile workers and railroad workers of Moscow railroad center, the Central Workers' Cooperative and individual enterprises turned to the preschool subdivision for advice, requested it to recommend pedagogs, and to subsidize the maintenance of a kindergarten or the paying of personnel.

In order to draw the community into participating in general organizational work and into guiding the work of the preschool institutions, a subdivision council was formed out of representatives of all organizations conducting preschool activities.

The organizational work of the subdivision was conducted in accordance with the following principles: kindergartens were organized for children of workers in the immediate vicinity of the home of the working family or the enterprise where the mothers worked.

Attached to the kindergartens, soviets were formed out of representatives of workers' organizations of the enterprise served by the kindergarten and the section on public education of the rayon soviet. The task of the kindergarten soviets was to organize joint work in educating the children in the kindergarten and in the family, and also to organize extensive propaganda on questions of education.

Of particular significance in the establishment of close ties between the organs of public education and the kindergartens, with the workers' community was the activity of the delegates of the women's divisions, which attracted a mass of working men and women into practical tasks. These included the repair of quarters, the sewing of clothing and linen for the children, the making of toys, and often even furniture, and the preparation of country summer quarters for children. In the summer of 1918 several enterprises were already taking children to summer houses.

Figures speak convincingly of the role of the workers' community in the new matter. By the end of 1918 there were in Moscow 76 kindergartens with 3,495 children in them, while at the beginning of the year there had been 12 kindergartens

with 250 children in them. This means that during the single year 64 kindergartens had been established for 3,245 children. This was possible only because of the active participation of the workers.

The conditions brought on by civil war, intervention, and economic devastation meant that the creation of kindergartens was faced with many difficulties: the absence of materials and manpower for the repair of buildings, a lack of fuel, and many other things. The difficulties were overcome when the working men and women took the care of children into their own hands.

The working women were becoming more and more drawn into production and socio-political life. With an eight-hour working day for the mother, the kindergarten had to operate at least 10 hours in order to enable the mother to fulfill her public obligations. The question of longer kindergartens began to be discussed, as was the principal question of the possibility of developing a broad network of kindergartens, when the country had no resources for providing them with trained pedagogical personnel, quarters or equipment answering normal pedagogical needs.

Opponents of the development of a broad network of kindergartens and a longer kindergarten day expressed a fear for the quality of educational work and the harm of the child remaining for a long period in a collective. Life demanded the opening of preschool institutions wherever woman's labor was used. It was often necessary to open children's rooms in the living quarters attached to textile mills or in houses, in order not to leave children without supervision. The task of the organs of public education was to help these primitive organizations obtain good conditions for bringing up children, prepare leaders in short courses, and daily adjust conditions for the normal course of a child's life with the proper regimen, nourishment, and sleep.

The organization of the kindergartens was greeted by the workers as a great achievement.

N. K. Krupskaya, at a meeting in Mono [Moscow Division of Public Education] told of how V. I. Lenin, while visiting the "Dinamo" plant asked the workers whether their life had changed under the Soviet regime, and they replied with pride that they had opened a kindergarten. Talking about this, Vladimir Il'ich said that it was necessary to open more kindergartens attached to factories and plants and to inform the masses on a broad scale of such measures being taken by the Soviet regime.

There were kindergartens existing under far from ideal conditions in respect to quarters and equipment, but work-

ing in them were qualified pedagogs devoted to the cause who won authority among the parents and public organizations of the enterprises, which gave them assistance in improving the material base of the kindergartens. These kindergartens were the pride of the enterprises, the rayon and the city. It was possible to lean on their pedagogical experience in the training of new teachers. Many of them devoted themselves to the training of preschool cadres. Their names are widely known even today: Comrades Arkhangel'skaya, Karpinskaya, Vaynshteyn, Shevyakova, Bogolyubskaya, Tatishcheva, Ratner, and others.

Side by side with the usual kindergartens primitive kindergartens were formed in Moscow.

In the summer of 1918 a network of summer centers for children of preschool age was organized, with food and pedagogical guidance. During the summer, quarters and equipment were prepared, and in the fall many of the centers consolidated as kindergartens.

In 1918 a start was made in the transportation of children to the country for health purposes.

With the development of the network of kindergartens, the lack of trained workers was sharply felt. At the beginning of 1918 short three-week courses were organized for training pedagogs. In the courses discussions on educational problems and practical subjects on labor, games and singing were conducted and a physician gave a short course on physical education.

In the initial years courses of this type were the only form of the training of directors of kindergartens. The courses were composed of persons with secondary education, but at the beginning of 1919 there was a course for the training of directors of preschool institutions from among the young working women of factories and plants.

At the First Moscow Conference of Preschool Workers in September 1918, at which the first year of work was summed up, there was heated discussion of the most important problems of the life and development of the new type of kindergarten for children of workers of the socialist society. The kindergarten was regarded as an institution which lay the foundation for the teaching of qualities necessary for future champions and builders of new forms of communal life.

The conference saw the means of attaining this goal in the appropriate organization of the life and the collective activity of children.

Concrete indications for practical work were developed simultaneously with better pedagogs. They took into account

the peculiarities of preschool age with respect to physical education, the acquiring of habits, the fostering of feelings of collectivism and concerning the significance of games and labor and aesthetic education.

The pedagog, in accordance with these indications, should not only observe the activity of the child, but actively aid children in their development, in the unfolding of new traits and qualities worthy of the future workers of a socialist society.

The question of the role of the kindergarten as a means of educating the future members of socialist society was discussed by Moscow preschool workers at a conference in April 1919, on the eve of the First All-Russian Congress on Preschool Education.

In the decisions of the conference it was written that the new forms of children's life in the kindergarten, built on the principle of collectivism, were laying the foundation for a new ethics, as a result of which the kindergarten was to occupy an appropriate place in the creation of a socialist culture.

The ties with the workers' environment, the party organizations of plants and factories, and the women's divisions and women's commissions made possible an ever deeper awareness on the part of kindergarten workers of the socialist aims and tasks of preschool education. It should be stated that all these principles were worked out and adopted in a bitter struggle with the old specialists on preschool education.

In the spring of 1918, with the transfer to Moscow of the Narkompros, Moscow workers gained the support of D. A. Lazurkina, the first head of the preschool division, and concrete assistance in solving the principal problems of pedagogical work, as well as problems of the financing of children's institutions.

The entire creative work of the initial period of preschool education in Moscow was accomplished with the direct help of the Moscow party organization of the Moscow soviet.

END

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